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“Religious Equality”— National Apostacy.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, COLCHESTER,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

Visitation of the Venerable the Archdeacon of
Colchester,

JUNE 17, 1881,

BY THE

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This Sermon is printed at the request of many of the Clergy and Churchwardens who heard it, and who were of opinion that its publication might be serviceable. I have appended to it a recent Pastoral Letter of the ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY and a "List of Sects."

"They conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night."
Nehemiah iv., 8, 9.

SERMON.

1 Kings xviii. 21 :

“IF THE LORD BE GOD, FOLLOW HIM :
BUT IF BAAL, THEN FOLLOW HIM.”

IF Jehovah could have consented to be but one among the many deities whom men have been pleased to enthrone for worship, there would have been no “religious difficulty,” from the creation to the present hour. But this He never could do. “I am the Lord, and there is none beside Me,” is His constant testimony. “I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”¹

So when Christ came He claimed man's homage for his Father, who had also decreed and appointed that “all men should honour the Son, even as they

1 Deut. xxxii. 39 : Isa. xlii. 8.

honour the Father.”² If Christ would have announced himself as simply the *equal* of Abraham or of Moses, following after them in His turn, to supplement what they had done before, the Jews would have had no great quarrel against Him. But He claimed over them a superiority which was *divine*, saying, “Before Abraham was, I AM;” while His Apostle declares that “Moses was faithful as a *servant* in all his house, but Christ as a *Son* over his own house.”³ In accordance with this, the faithful Christian must believe the faith of Christ to be the exclusive faith given by God and sealed with His promise of salvation; the alone *new covenant* which God hath established, having taken away the old; and that there is “*None other Name*” than *His* “under Heaven given unto men whereby we must be saved.”⁴

2 John v. 23.

3 John viii. 53-58; Heb. iii. 2-6.

4 Heb. i. 1; Heb. viii. 13; Acts iv. 12. The Marquis of Queensbury, speaking at a meeting held in support of Mr. Bradlaugh, claims to be an adherent of “the religion of Humanity,” which, says his Lordship, is “the outgrowth of Christianity, and *must take its place*.” The Christian knows that God’s *last* message or revelation is “by His Son,” and that the religion of the GOD-MAN is, in the truest sense, the “religion of Humanity,” revealing God as man’s Father, Christ as his Brother, and Heaven as his home.

I think, brethren, that the words of Elijah (which I have recited in the text) are words of very solemn import to this generation, in which a false liberalism is extant, involving a practical apostacy and departure from the faith of Christ. Jezebel, the persecutor of God's people, was right in one respect, viz., that it was not possible for Jehovah and Baal to coalesce and divide dominion, and she was therefore set upon destroying the prophets of Jehovah, in order that she might win the throne of Baal. When the great trial came it was a distinct contest between the devotees of the two religions. "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal then follow him." And when the trial was ended, its issue was clearly apprehended by all the people, who shouted—"The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

Brethren, we have arrived at a great crisis in our national history. Years back we reached, thank God, the firm ground of RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, by which every man is free to profess the religion to which he

consents ; is left answerable for his choice only to God and his own conscience ; no longer liable, as of old, to suffer penalties or incur civil disabilities for his non-acceptance of the national form of Christianity, or any form of it at all. This is RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, and it is a good thing ; for the spirit of man cannot be coerced, and the Gospel of Grace leans not on an arm of flesh, and cannot really be promoted by the civil sword.

But now-a-days the cry is for RELIGIOUS EQUALITY, which is a very different thing indeed ; and I deem it my duty this morning to lead you to consider what is the meaning of this modern cry. RELIGIOUS EQUALITY—what does it mean ? It does not mean that all men should have equal rights of citizenship, irrespective of their religious professions, which is already secured under the term *religious liberty* ; but it means that all religions shall be deemed equal—equally true or equally false—in the eyes of the law. It means this, that the Nation as a Nation shall abjure all profession of Christ-

ianity, and place the faith of Christ, as the Church has received the same from the beginning, on precisely equal terms, not only with Unitarianism, which denies the Godhead of Christ and His atonement, but also with Mormonism, the pretended revelation to Joseph Smith, and with the religion of the followers of Joanna Southcote (who claimed in the last century to be the mother of Messiah, and drew away disciples after her) ; ⁵ and with the religion of Mumbo Jumbo, and the rest of the heathen deities.

Brethren, I am very far from saying, nay, from believing, that the majority of those who are trying to overthrow our National Christianity see the end towards which they are working. But, neither did the Jews of old know what they were doing in killing the Lord of Glory ; yet *they did it*, and are now rueing the consequences. *They did it ignorantly* (as St.

⁵ Southcote Joanna : a fanatic of this name, formerly of Exeter, came to London, where her followers at one time amounted to many thousands, amongst whom were Colonels and Generals in the Army, although the low and ignorant principally were her dupes. She has still her places of worship. See Haydn's Dictionary of Dates ; and Appendix, List of Sects

Paul assures us),⁶ and no less certainly, because ignorantly, are our contemporaries labouring “to crucify Him afresh, and put Him to open shame.”⁷

Brethren, those who know me best, can bear witness that in my eleven years ministry in this place, I have not been wont to speak hard words of those who differ from us, and walk not with us; and God knows that I want neither will nor power to treat them and their opinions with the respect which is due from man to man. But that is a spurious charity which obscures truth, and dares not point out false issues; and in these days I deem it faithful to point out what really underlies the cry of religious equality, and that it ends in the dethronement of Christ.

The Devil has sown dissension broadcast over our land, and has taught men to *boast* of their divisions, rather than to deplore them, and now the 165 regis-

6 1 Cor. ii. 8; Acts iii. 14-17.

7 Heb. vi. 6.

tered sects, most of them professing to bear an allegiance to Christ, are joining with atheists and infidels to fight down all national acknowledgment of Him whom they call Lord. Years back these men declared that they only wanted liberty and exemption from some burdens which galled their consciences; but now they are strenuously claiming that the National Church should be disowned, all her property given voluntarily by her children seized and confiscated, and the claim to be a Christian nation PUBLICLY disavowed.

Of that *property* I do not mean to speak many words; for the care of a Christian man for *it* must be infinitely less than for the *religion* which it was given to foster. But I should like to ask our opponents who talk so glibly about “*State-endowments*,” to point us to one single Act of Parliament which has created and bestowed endowments upon us. Our tithe was voluntarily charged upon the land by the *owners*. Our glebes have been *given* to *us*, and though by reason of the time our bene-

factors' names have for the most part perished, yet some parcels of land can still be identified with the donors ; while our houses have been for the most part paid for by the Clergy themselves. To seize then on property thus voluntarily given for the service of the Church of Christ—so long as the trusts connected with it are being fulfilled—would be as high-handed and unjust as to alienate the property of private men. If the Church's title be not good, no title can be good at all.

But what I want all men to realise fully is that to disestablish our National Church would be really and truly to dethrone Christ in our land. I want you to discern clearly that RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND TOLERATION are one thing—and an admirable and right thing ; and RELIGIOUS EQUALITY—putting Jehovah and Baal on an equal platform—quite another thing, involving a practical national apostacy. I do not mean, of course, that Christ would not still be worshipped—I know

He *would* be, and that the fires of trial might purify elect souls and make them shine the brighter. But we may not listen to the Tempter, who would bid us “*cast ourselves down*,” looking to God still to uphold us ; for it is written, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” ⁸

We cannot, without the gravest national sin, run back to the state of things which existed in Pagan Rome, where the Emperors were willing to give to Christ a place in their pantheon of deities, if only the Christians would have accepted one place for Him among the “Gods many and Lords many” of the Heathen. But those old Christians knew better than to accept this position ; and with one voice declared with St. Paul, “To us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.” ⁹

⁸ Luke iv. 9-12.

⁹ 1 Cor. viii, 5, 6.

The historian tells us of Alexander Severus, who became Emperor of Rome in the Third Century after Christ, that he “had no hereditary attachment to the Roman form of Paganism. He seems to have affected a kind of universalism—he paid decent respect to the Gods of the Capitol; he held in honour the Egyptian worship, and enlarged the Temples of Isis and Serapis. In his own palace, with respectful indifference, he enshrined, as it were, as his household deities, the representatives of the different religious or theophilosophic systems which were prevalent in the Roman Empire—Orpheus, Abraham, Christ, and Apollonius of Tyana.”¹⁰ I cannot help interpolating as a modern parallel to this, that I was told at the recent Church Congress at Leicester, that at the “Hall of Science” in that town there were emblazoned on successive panels the names of the world’s benefactors, and that amongst others might be seen the names of Voltaire, Christ, and Tom Paine, the author of “The Rights of Man.”

¹⁰ Dean Milman’s *History of Early Christianity*, vol. ii. 177.

Shall *we*, brethren, in our turn, do the like to this? Shall we, after so many centuries of Christian profession, degrade our blessed Lord from His high pedestal of national recognition, and in the name of "RELIGIOUS EQUALITY" put the faith of Christ on an even platform with Judaism, which he came to supersede; with the religion of Mahomet, the false prophet; and with Mormonism, the imposture of Joseph Smith, and the fanatic wickedness of Joanna Southcott, both of whom have their Chapels and their worshippers in England at this day?

Brethren, it is notorious that a bid is being made at this time to range the tenant farmers and others upon the side of the enemies of the Church, by promising to relieve the land from the tithe rent-charge. I trust that the attempt may not succeed.

That the burdens upon land are heavy indeed all must agree, for *new charges* have been continually laid upon it which should justly be charged upon *property of every*

sort. But those who are thus scheming are *not* the men who are really earnest in relieving the burdens of the landed interest by taking any share of them on their own shoulders, and they never will, and never can, release the land from the rent charge, though they may divert it to secular purposes. ¹¹

May none who profess and call themselves Churchmen, not to say Christians, be induced for a “morsel of meat to sell their birthright,” ¹²—their birthright as Englishmen to have the Word and Sacraments of Christ proclaimed and ministered in every village and every hamlet.

If the Church be robbed of her property how can these ancient blessings be retained amid sparse populations? They will either die out and be lost, or they must be maintained by very large and voluntary contributions levied year by year upon *those very*

¹¹ See a most able tract, entitled “What good will it do?” by the Rev. J. C. Ryle (now Bishop of Liverpool). W. Hunt and Co. Price 3d.

¹² Heb. xii. 16.

men whose rent-charge will be taken to relieve the general rates.

May God help us to struggle manfully, while there is yet time, to avert this grievous wrong, this national disaster, this national sin.

Let every man before—either by his vote or by his voice —furthering the designs of those who would disestablish our national Church, reflect that he would be thus contributing to a national dethronement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and hear the voice of God saying to him, by the lips of his Prophet, whose utterance is recorded for our warning, “If Christ be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.”



APPENDIX I.

*Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury.**Lambeth Palace, S.E., May 11th, 1881.*

MY REVEREND BRETHREN AND MY BRETHREN OF THE LAITY,

Attention has been recently called to certain "*Practical Suggestions relative to the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church of England*," circulated by the Liberation Society a body which has risen to a considerable political importance, and which has committed itself to an almost fanatical hatred of all Established Churches.

I find in the programme issued by this body, on page 11, the following, amongst other, proposals as to the Church of England ; that, as soon as may be, Cathedrals, Abbeys, and other monumental buildings should be placed under national control, and be maintained for such uses as Parliament may from time to time determine ; that all old Churches, meaning thereby Churches built before the year 1818, should be vested in a parochial board to be elected by the ratepayers, which board should have power to deal with them for the general benefit of the parishioners, power of sale being given.

Taking these proposals as specimens of the legislation which the advocates of Disestablishment desire, I think we have some reason to be thankful for the plainness of their utterances. It is quite possible that many persons, not fully acquainted with the designs of this body may have incautiously acted or spoken in such a manner as to give the impression that they were to some degree in sympathy with its mis-called liberal designs ; but the overwhelming majority of the people of this country looks, I am persuaded, with no favour on the project which the body I allude to is formed to promote, and its intentions have only to be clearly stated that they may be repudiated by both the great political parties in the kingdom. Meanwhile the fanatical spirit which has dictated the programme of the Liberation

Society must not be despised because its recognised supporters may be comparatively few.

In page 15 of the "Practical Suggestions," to which I have referred, we read: "It has been already stated that these suggestions are not to be regarded as an exhaustive statement of the various points which would require to be dealt with in connection with the Disestablishment of the English Church. It is necessary to add that there are also subjects, which, though popularly associated with such a change, have no necessary connection with it. The most important of these is the Succession to the Crown, under what is known as the Act of Settlement. The exclusion of members of the Roman Catholic Church from the throne of Great Britain is a political, quite as much as an ecclesiastical question, and must be dealt with on its own merits. It was left untouched when the Irish Establishment was abolished, and may, in like manner, be left untouched when those of England and Scotland are disestablished also."

Now, it may be perfectly true that the English people are as little prepared, at the present moment, for giving effect to the destructive theories of this Society in reference to strictly ecclesiastical arrangements as they are to embark on that other important subject, which is foreshadowed by the above statement, viz., the re-opening of the question of the Succession to the Crown, under what is known as the Act of Settlement. It is now, however, obvious that the earnestness with which these views are propagated can no longer be safely ignored by any well-wisher of his country. Large sums of money have been subscribed to further the dissemination of these and such-like principles throughout the land. Not only in great towns, but in small country towns and villages, Lecturers of the Liberation Society gather together meetings, often of very illiterate persons, to whom they recommend such schemes as I have mentioned by exaggerated statements as to the condition and working of the Established Church.

It constantly happens that this work is systematically carried on in towns or parishes without even coming to the knowledge of those who would be competent to answer the unscrupulous statements which are sown broadcast among the less educated of our people. The newspapers advocating the views of the Liberation Society, many thousand copies of which are circulated weekly throughout the whole kingdom, are not usually read by persons able or willing to refute by a plain statement of facts the allegations they contain.

Churchmen have thought, and wisely, that the best defence

of their Church was to be found in the quiet, conscientious discharge of duty ; and every Clergyman and layman attached to the Church of England will do well to remember that if he fails in his religious duties he thereby strengthens the hands of those who seek to destroy his Church. Still, it will not, in my judgment, be wise longer to overlook the attempts which are certainly now being systematically made, with vigour and perseverance, in so many neighbourhoods, to pervert the judgment and alienate the loyal regard of our people.

The Church Defence Institution is ready to give whatever assistance is desired in order to meet these attacks. While scrupulously avoiding all agitation in the many places in which we are thankful to believe there is peace, its object is to supply in a cheap, popular, and convenient form, sound and accurate information as to the history and condition of the National Church, and, when required, to furnish competent Lecturers, who may follow the agents of the Liberation Society in their inroads, and expose the fallacies they would palm off on the ignorant. For such purposes as these, however, the Institution requires greatly increased support. Its annual income is at present quite insufficient for the performance of the work it is called upon to do. A meeting, largely and influentially attended, has lately been held at Lambeth Palace, at which the necessity for such exertions has been clearly demonstrated ; and I think myself justified in appealing to all Englishmen, to whatever political or theological party they belong, provided they love the Church of England, and desire that its ministrations should continue to be a barrier against ignorance, infidelity, superstition, and vicious living, to assist in saving the minds of our people from being led astray, to the great injury of themselves, and the generations that are to succeed them.

I remain,

Your faithful Brother and Servant,

A. C. CANTUAR.

APPENDIX II.

Religious Sects—Places of Worship.

Places of Meeting for Religious Worship in England and Wales have been certified to the Registrar-General on behalf of persons described as follows :—

Advent Christians.	Covenanters.
Advents, The.	Coventry Mission Band.
Anglican Church.	Danish Lutherans.
Apostolics.	Dependents.
Arminian New Society.	Disciples in Christ.
Baptists.	Disciples of Jesus Christ.
Baptized Believers.	Eastern Orthodox Greek Church.
Believers in Christ.	Eclectics.
Believers in the Divine Visitation of Joanna Southcote, Prophetess of Exeter.	Episcopalian Dissenters.
Believers meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.	Evangelical Free Church.
Benevolent Methodists.	Evangelical Mission.
Bible Christians.	Evangelical Unionists.
Bible Defence Association.	Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Brethren.	Free Catholic Christian Church.
Calvinists and Welsh Calvinists.	Free Christian Association.
Calvinistic Baptists.	Free Christians. Free Church.
Catholic Apostolic Church.	Free Church (Episcopal).
Christadelphians.	Free Church of England.
Christians owning no name but the Lord Jesus.	Free Evangelical Christians.
Christians who object to be otherwise designated.	Free Grace Gospel Christians.
Christian Believers.	Free Gospel & Christian Brethren.
Christian Brethren.	Free Gospel Church.
Christian Disciples.	Free Gospellers.
Christian Eliasites.	Free Methodists.
Christian Israelites.	Free Union Church.
Christian Mission.	General Baptist.
Christian Teetotalers.	General Baptist New Connection.
Christian Temperance Men.	German Evangelical Community.
Christian Unionists.	German Lutherans.
Church of Scotland.	German Roman Catholics.
Church of Christ.	Glassites. Glory Band.
Church of the People.	Greek Catholic.
Church of progress.	Halifax Psychological Society.
Congregational Baptists.	Hallelujah Band.
Congregational Temperance Free Church.	Hope Mission.
Countess of Huntingdon's Connection.	Humanitarians.
	Independents.
	Independent Methodists.
	Indep. Religious Reformers.
	Independent Unionists.
	Inghamites. Israelites.
	Latter Day Saints. Jews.

RELIGIOUS SECTS—CONTINUED.

Lutherans.	Reform Free Church Wesleyan
Methodist Reform Union.	Methodists.
Missionaries.	Reformed Presbyterians.
Modern Methodists.	Revivalists. Revival Band.
Moravians.	Roman Catholics.
Mormons.	Salem Society.
Newcastle Sailors' Society.	Salvation Army.
New Church.	Sandemanians.
New Connec. General Baptists.	Scotch Baptists.
New Connection Wesleyans.	Second Advent Brethren.
New Hebrew Congregation.	Secularists.
New Jerusalem Church.	Separatists (Protestant).
New Methodist.	Seventh Day Baptists.
Old Baptists.	Society of the New Church.
Open Baptists.	Spiritual Church.
Open Brethren.	Spiritualists.
Order of St. Austin, The.	Strict Baptists.
Orthodox Eastern Church.	Swedenborgians.
Particular Baptists.	Temperance Methodists.
Peculiar People.	Testimony Congregational
Plymouth Brethren.	Church.
Polish Society.	Theistic Church.
Portsmouth Mission.	Trinitarians.
Presbyterian Church in England.	Union Baptists.
Presbyterian Church of England.	Union Churchmen.
Presbyterian Baptists.	Union Congregationalists.
Primitive Congregation.	Union Free Church.
Primitive Free Church.	Unionists.
Primitive Methodists.	Unitarians.
Progressionists.	Unitarian Baptists.
Protestant Members of the Church	Unitarian Christians.
of England.	United Christian Church.
Protestants adhering to Articles	United Free Methodist Church.
1 to 18, but rejecting Ritual.	United Brethren or Moravians.
Protestant Trinitarians.	United Presbyterians.
Protestant Union.	Universal Christians.
Providence.	Unsectarian.
Quakers. Ranters.	Welsh Calvinistic Methodists.
Rational Christians.	Welsh Free Presbyterians.
Reformers.	Welsh Wesleyan Methodists.
Reformed Church of England.	Wesleyans.
Reformed Episcopal Church.	Wesleyan-Methodist Association.
Reformed Presbyterians or Cove-	Wesleyan Reformers.
nanters.	Wesleyan Reform Glory Band.
Recreative Religionists.	Working Man's Evangelistic
Refuge Methodists.	Mission Chapels.
	Worshippers of God.

(Whitaker's Almanac, 1881.)



